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WRTG 1320

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December 7, 2012

***Love Behind Glass Lenses: Sociable Robots and Us***

Over the years, there has been a lot of speculation as to how the use of robotics in popular culture is shaping modern society. With the heavy use of social networking, robotic toys, and therapeutic companions, it’s hard to escape the world of sociable robotics even if we wanted to. So what does this mean for us as a people? Is this a good thing or not? Some say that therapeutic companions are helpful for the elderly because it levitates depression and gets them active. Others say that the companions strip the individuals of their basic need to have human interaction and fool them into thinking that they are really connecting with somebody.

Concerning the dilemma that was just mentioned, I wish to explore the effects sociable robots are having on us as people. How does social networking affect our social skills? How do robots help academically? How do robots become our companions? Do we even want them to? These are all questions I hope to answer during my research to find statistics and articles over the effects sociable robots are having on the human population.

I chose to write about this topic because in interests me to know how much things like Twitter and baby dolls that talk are effecting us, even if we don’t realize it. Popular culture has a huge effect on the human population just by itself, but since that culture is becoming more and more infused with sociable robotics, does it affect us differently? I also chose to write about this topic because I do not know the uses for robots outside of toys, factories, and social networking. Being able to read about sociable robots with various purposes in various environments is very interesting. In addition, I want to form an unbiased opinion about sociable robotics. In this research, I will look at both the negative and positive statistics regarding the effects sociable robots have on their human counterparts. If, in the end, there is more negative than positive, then I will know with an unbiased mind that sociable robots are bad for society.

As for my audience, they should be highly interested in this topic. Most 21st century Americans are surrounded by some form of sociable robot on a regular basis (i.e. Twitter, toys, appliances). Because of this direct connection with what I wish to research, I would image that my audience would be interested in this topic because it involved things that are relevant to them and to their lives. Social networking sites, I think to be the most relevant form of sociable robotics in this society, surely has a wide variety of both positive and negative affects to the individual and community. I would think that my audience would be eager to hear such information.

Even though America has not been as quick to accept sociable robots into its culture, it is here nonetheless. As a child of the 90s, I was bombarded with “new age” gadgets and toys resembling small dogs and infants. While I’m not the only one who experienced this during childhood, I am interested to know how that as affected me personally, as well as others. Not all sociable robots are like Bender from *Futurama* or Rosey, the Robot Maid, from *The Jetsons*. Some are as simple as a website—others as a baby doll. Yet *all* of these examples have played a part in our perception and eventual acceptance of sociable robots.